

The Tobacco Industry Lies: Who Are They Trying to Fool?

1.) Tobacco Industry Claim:

"I've not seen documents which demonstrate to me that the companies or any company has targeted kids as smokers—as customers."

--Spokesperson for Tobacco CEO's testifying at Minnesota tobacco trial in St. Paul, February 1998

REALITY:

An updated Brown and Williamson Tobacco Corp. document described company research on the "starting [smoking] behavior" of children as young as 5 years old.

--Document released in Minnesota Trial, March 1998

2.) Tobacco Industry Claim:

"If I thought that ad (the Joe Camel campaign) caused any young people to begin smoking, I'd pull it in a heartbeat...it's fun, just like Snoopy the dog sells Met Life Insurance, just like Garfield the cat sells Embassy Suites Hotels."

--James Johnston, CEO of R.J. Reynolds Tobacco, April 14, 1994

REALITY:

Secret documents released in January 1998 by Rep. Henry Waxman show that since 1974 RJR has been trying to attract smokers as young as 13. It aimed Joe Camel ads at kids and pursued a teen market because "they represent tomorrow's cigarette business."

--C.A. Tucker, R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Vice President of Marketing, 1974

3.) Tobacco Industry Claim:

"We should not be marketing cigarettes to young people. It is certainly anomalous to the Phillip Morris I know."

--Geoffrey Bible, CEO of Phillip Morris, Minnesota Tobacco trial, February 1998

REALITY:

"Marlboro dominates in the 17 and younger age category, capturing over 50 percent of the market."

--1979 Philip Morris memo

4.) Tobacco Industry Claim:

"What's the tobacco industry doing to discourage youth smoking? A LOT."

--Tobacco Institute Advertisement, 1994

REALITY:

"Realistically, if our company is to survive and prosper over the long term, we must get our share of the youth market. In my opinion, this would require new brands tailored to the youth market..."

--Claude Teague of R.J. Reynolds Tobacco in his "Research Planning Memorandum on Some Thoughts About New Brands of Cigarettes for the Youth Market," February 2, 1973.

5.) Tobacco Industry Claim:

"Now, I want to be very clear. We do not survey anyone under the age of 18."

--James Johnston, CEO of R.J. Reynolds Tobacco, April 14, 1994

REALITY:

Just one year prior to its domestic launch of the domestic Joe Camel Campaign, RJR, through its Canadian subsidiary, commissioned a study on 15-17 year-olds.

--An R.J. Reynolds Tobacco report "Youth Target 1987," 1987

6.) Tobacco Industry Claim:

"We advertise and promote our products only to adult smokers. There is no significant connection between advertising and the decision to start smoking. Studies have shown that peer pressure and parental influence are the chief factors in a youngster's decision to smoke."

REALITY:

Children see--and act on--tobacco advertising and promotion. Although other factors also come into play, advertising and promotion definitely succeed in creating demand for tobacco products. Advertising and promotion increase sales both by increasing the consumption of current smokers, and by attracting new consumers.

7.) Tobacco Industry Claim:

"We sponsor bold initiatives designed to discourage young people from smoking."

REALITY:

At best, tobacco industry initiatives are ineffective in preventing young people from taking up smoking. At worst, they are an insidious extension of the industry's strategy of luring young people to start smoking by presenting the cigarettes as a rite of passage into the adult world.

8.) Tobacco Industry Claim:

"We do not, under any circumstances, want kids to smoke."

--R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Advertising Campaign, 1994

REALITY:

"I need all of you to study the attached scroll list of...stores that are heavily frequented by young adult shoppers. These stores can be in close proximity to colleges, high schools or areas where there are a large number of young adults...The purpose of this exercise is to be able to identify those stores during 1990 where we would try to keep premium items in stores at all times.

--1990 memo written by J.P. McMahon, Division Manager of RJR Sales Company in Sarasota, Florida, to Sales Reps. Regarding the young adult market and headlined "VERY IMPORTANT, PLEASE READ CAREFULLY!!!"

9.) Tobacco Industry Claim:

"Cigarette smoking is an adult custom. The decision to smoke should be an adult one. Children should not smoke."

REALITY:

"Smoking is a deadly addiction, responsible for 3 million deaths each year. By using words like "custom" the industry diverts attention from the well-established

devastating health impacts of tobacco. Because nicotine is as addictive as heroin or cocaine, using tobacco is not a choice once you're hooked. And the nicotine industry hooks 60% of its customers before they're even 14 years old.

10.) Tobacco Industry Claim:

"We abide by local laws and regulations in every country in which we do business. It is as inappropriate to apply U.S. marketing restrictions overseas as it would be for those countries to impose their laws here."

REALITY:

The tobacco industry's attempt to use outrageous double standards for national self-determination is as offensive as it is transparent. Whenever they can get away with it, the tobacco transnationals show nothing but contempt for the laws and regulations of other countries.

11.) Tobacco Industry Claim:

"We have for many years adhered to a voluntary Code restricting our marketing practices."

REALITY:

The tobacco industry's voluntary Advertising and Promotion Code is a sham that does more harm than good by giving the companies a potent PR tool while compelling no changes in behavior. The code is completely without independent enforcement—the companies simply assert their compliance, and no one outside the industry has any authority to stop even the grossest violations.

12.) Tobacco Industry Claim:

"We do not 'spike' our cigarettes with nicotine."

--James W. Johnston, Chairman, R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Company
Advertisement, 1994

REALITY:

"We did decide that we needed a little more oomph, a little more pizzazz, if you will, in an ultra-low-tar cigarette. So we manipulated the blend to raise the nicotine level slightly."

--Testimony by a confidential informant, known as "DOC," a former tobacco industry executive to officials of the Food and Drug Administration, 1994

